

NEWS RELEASE

**INDIANA
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**



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Joseph E. Kernan, Governor
Alan D. Degner, Commissioner

Kernan Awards Grant to Support Workforce Needs in Northern Indiana

Indianapolis, Ind. – Focused on meeting the needs of Northern Indiana businesses, today Gov. Joe Kernan awarded a grant to upgrade the skills of workers in Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall and St. Joseph counties.

Awarded through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, the Northern Indiana Workforce Investment Board (WIB) recently received \$297,000 from the agency's Energizing Indiana's Workforce grant. The funding will be used to establish a 'short-term skills' grant to be utilized by companies in the four-county region.

"I applaud the commitment of the Northern Indiana WIB in its effort to diversify and strengthen the local economy by aiding companies in this way," said Kernan. "Fundamental to the success of any company is the strength of its workforce. This project will help to make sure that businesses in this part of the state have the workforce they need, while allowing workers to continually improve their skills and become even more marketable."

Announced in October of 2003, the one-time grants are designed to encourage the state's WIBs to create stronger links between economic and workforce development. Specifically, the funds are used to support efforts to upgrade the skills of the Hoosier workforce in the four industry sectors: life sciences, advanced manufacturing, high-tech distribution and information technology.

"These grants not only support the goals of Energize Indiana, they also support the state's workforce development initiative, Indiana@Work. By providing this funding to the WIBS, we can work together to develop programs to support the needs of our workers and employers," added Kernan.

Using the funding the Northern Indiana WIB will develop a pilot Fast Track training program to improve application and usage skills in robot technology as applied to advanced manufacturing. It will also work with the Crossroads Academy of Marshall County to address the lack of skilled technology professionals needed to design, implement, and manage computer-based businesses. This will assist in the ongoing effort to drive the region's commerce and education. The grants will require linkage with the WorkKeys job profiles and assessment projects, which is a centerpiece of the Indiana@Work initiative.

"This grant is another example of the Northern Indiana Workforce Board's commitment to improving the skills of the existing workforce", said WIB CEO Juan Manigault. "These funds support continued economic growth by increasing the adaptability and flexibility of our local skilled workforce."

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Indiana@Work is comprehensive workforce development plan, announced by the governor in his State-of-the-State address. The program combines the efforts of DWD and the Indiana Department of Commerce in an effort to match jobseekers with companies that have openings. It also provides training funds to businesses, for potential employees who are facing a "skills gap" that could keep them from attaining higher-pay jobs. And, eventually, Indiana@Work will help workers develop "e-resumes" that they can carry with them throughout their careers.

Through its various programs and initiatives, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies create new jobs and improve employee skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, partners with the state's 27 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures and operates a statewide job placement service.

For more information on this, or any other DWD program, contact Jeff Harris at 317/232-3396 or visit the web site at www.workforce.IN.gov.

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